

Public Involvement Plan

May 2019

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1.0 Introduction

1.1. Purpose

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) is committed to ensuring accessible and inclusive public involvement in all agency projects. As a recipient of federal financial assistance, DDOT is required to, “develop and use a documented public involvement process that provides opportunities for public review and comment at key planning decision points,” (23 CFR §450.210). DDOT strives to exceed these regulations through early, continuous, and transparent public outreach, engagement, and involvement. Successful public involvement engages communities, produces projects that address neighborhood needs and desires, and builds trust between DDOT and neighborhoods impacted by DDOT plans and projects. This document outlines DDOT’s responsibilities to communities to:

- Provide early and continuous public involvement
- Collaborate with stakeholders in a respectful manner
- Schedule public involvement at convenient meeting times and locations
- Provide effective outreach to low-income, minority, elderly, limited mobility, low-English proficiency (LEP), and no-English proficiency (NEP) populations

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) Public Involvement Plan (PIP) serves two key purposes: (1) Identifies DDOT’s requirements, processes, and tools for public involvement and (2) serves as a manual for DDOT project managers. The DDOT PIP also provides:

- Legal requirements for public involvement
- Definitions of key stakeholders
- Outline of the project development process
- Methods to encourage accessible and inclusive public involvement
- A checklist for the development of a project public involvement plan

DDOT project managers across all DDOT Divisions (Appendix A) should refer to the *DDOT PIP* for guidance on standards and expectations for successfully implementing public involvement strategies. The project manager for a DDOT project is responsible for managing the execution of the project, including the oversight of contractor performance, project schedule, project budget, and public involvement. Every DDOT project has one project manager who is assigned by the appropriate division’s Associate Director to oversee these elements.

1.2. DDOT Mission

Enhance the quality of life for District residents and visitors by ensuring that people, goods, and information move efficiently and safely, with minimal adverse impact on residents and the environment.

1.3. DDOT Vision

The District Department of Transportation is committed to achieving an exceptional quality of life in the nation's capital through more sustainable travel practices, safer streets and outstanding access to goods and services. Central to this vision is improving energy efficiency and modern mobility by providing next generation alternatives to single occupancy driving in the city

2.0 Federal and District Requirements for Public Involvement

2.1. Federal Requirements

Appendix B provides a list of all Federal requirements for Public Involvement.

2.2. District Requirements

2.2.1. DC Language Access Act of 2004

The purpose of the DC Language Access Act of 2004 is to ensure that all District agencies meet the requirements of DC Law 15-167, enacted on April 21, 2004. DC Law 15-167 seeks to promote greater public access and participation in government services, programs, benefits and activities for customers with limited or non-English proficiency (LEP or NEP). D.C. Official Code §2-1931 designates DDOT as a covered entity under this law. As such, DDOT must provide equal access of its programs and services to all persons living in, working in, or visiting the District of Columbia, regardless of their ability to speak English.

2.2.2. DDOT's Title VI Policy

It is the policy of the District of Columbia Department of Transportation to ensure that no person shall on the grounds of race, color, national origin, gender, age or disability as provided in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes (implemented through 23 CFR 200.9), be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity for which DDOT received Federal financial assistance.

2.2.3. Notice of Intent (NOI)

DDOT, pursuant to the “Administrative Procedure Amendment Act of 2000,” DC LAW 13-249 (48 DCR 3491, April 20, 2001), is required to provide a written notice to any Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) and the Council of the District of Columbia, of our intent to modify traffic and/or parking requirements. To comply with this requirement, DDOT has developed a standard operating procedure to outline this notification process for project managers. Notices are provided for the purpose of notification and solicitation of comments on the proposed modifications within the District. The public is given at least thirty (30) business days after the NOI issuance to provide DDOT with their comments on the proposed change. The issuing division’s Associate Director assigns a project manager to be the designated recipient for all public comments for each NOI. All public comments must be received in writing, via mail, or electronically. DDOT is required by this law to respond to all ANC comments in response to an NOI in writing.

D.C. Code 1-309.10, “ANC Duties and Responsibilities,” requires DDOT’s final decision-making process to give “great weight” to the comments received from ANCs. The D.C. Code reads:

D.C. Code 1-309.10 ANC Duties and Responsibilities; notice; great weight; access to documents; reports; contributions.

(3)(A) The issues and concerns raised in the recommendations of the Commission shall be given great weight during the deliberations by the government entity. Great weight requires acknowledgement of the Commission as the source of the recommendations and explicit reference to each of the Commission’s issues and concerns.

(B) In all cases the government entity is required to articulate its decision in writing. The written rationale of the decision shall articulate with particularity and precision the reasons why the Commission does or does not offer persuasive advice under the circumstances. In so doing, the government entity must articulate specific findings and conclusions with respect to each issue and concern raised by the Commission. Further, the government entity is required to support its position on the record.

(C) The government entity shall promptly send to the Commission and the respective ward Councilmember a copy of its written decision.

2.3. Public Notice

During any construction activity conducted by the DDOT's Asset Management Division, notifying the community is critical. For scheduled maintenance projects (eg. resurfacing streets and alleys; repairing curbs, gutters, and sidewalks) which are not a result of a planning process, the DDOT project team is required to draft a written notice to all impacted residents and businesses within the area at least two weeks prior to the start of construction. This notice is also provided to the Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner for the area and includes the expected start date, the nature of the work, and any anticipated impacts to the area. In addition, the notice lists a DDOT project manager for the community to contact directly for questions or immediate assistance.

Following the distribution of notices the project team is required to post Emergency No Parking signage for any area impacting parking. These signs are posted no earlier than 72 hours prior to construction to minimize any inconvenience to the community. Posting of these signs occurs on assets such as street lights and parking meters in order to be clearly visible by motorists.

2.4. DDOT Manuals

In addition to the Federal and District regulations that are outlined in Section 2.0, DDOT has developed manuals for ensuring appropriate and timely public involvement at various stages of the project development process. Appendix C lists these DDOT manuals and provides website links to each publication.

3.0 Public Involvement Plan (PIP)

At DDOT, each project consists of 5 distinct phases: (1) Planning, (2) Environmental Review (if necessary), (3) Preliminary Design, (4) Final Design, and (5) Construction. Some projects may not complete all five phases, depending on the results of analysis at each phase. Each phase of a project requires a separate Public Involvement Plan (PIP) to be completed by the DDOT project manager.

A new PIP is created for each phase of a project. The project manager for each phase is responsible for including a draft PIP in the Scope of Work for the solicitation of each phase. Refinement of the draft PIP may occur in the procurement phase when negotiating with consultants. Each PIP must be reviewed by staff from the DDOT Office of Civil Rights (OCR) and the DDOT Community Engagement (CE) Division and a PIP checklist (Appendix D) must be completed by the project manager in consultation with OCR and CE. The checklist does not list the entire universe of public outreach methods, but serves as a starting

point for discussion between the project manager and OCR and CE staff. Project managers are encouraged to innovate and test new public involvement methods in consultation with OCR and CE staff.

A project's PIP provides a framework for meaningful public engagement and outreach that will build trust and support for a project. Each PIP must have a unique approach tailored to an individual project, community and location. It is critical that a PIP accounts for underrepresented groups such as those with limited mobility, learning impairments, non-English speakers, youth, low-income, and the elderly. The final PIP receives sign off from the Project Manager's supervisor, the DDOT Office of Civil Rights (OCR), and the DDOT Community Engagement Division (CE). During the course of the project, DDOT project managers should inform OCR and CE when public meetings are held, the outcome of the meetings, and the project manager's next steps for addressing issues and moving forward. At the conclusion of each phase, the project manager will meet with OCR and CE to review if outreach has been effective or should be modified in the future.

4.0 Project Development Phases



4.1. Planning

The first phase of a transportation project is the Planning Phase. Planning guides the current and future use of the transportation network in the District given the changing needs and demands due to land uses, traffic patterns, and multimodal uses. Types of plans include long-range strategic plans, neighborhood plans, traffic safety investigations, livability studies, and corridor plans. Planning can also identify needs for Major Projects -such as streetscape, bridge, or other major capital investments – and projects to be included in the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP).

Public outreach tends to be the most robust in the Planning phase because DDOT is establishing the baseline from which to make future recommendations. In order to hear project input from impacted communities, DDOT must ensure the public has been informed of the project, existing conditions, and

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type of analysis to be performed, and data to be collected. Public involvement strategies are identified by the project manager in consultation with OCR and CE prior to public outreach and modified, if necessary, after initial public outreach begins.

4.2. Environmental + Preliminary Design

This phase involves preliminary engineering, conceptual design, transportation engineering studies, survey work, and requirements for right-of-way acquisition. If the potential for an environmental impact, as defined by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is identified during the planning phase, the next step would be to a stand-alone Environmental phase. If no environmental impact is anticipated, the project can be documented with a Categorical Exclusion and advance directly to Final Design.

Public involvement in this phase depends on whether there is environmental work that needs to be done or if environmental clearances have been signed and 30% design is being completed. Public outreach is more intense in an environmental review and is guided by outreach requirements detailed in DDOT's Environmental Manual. DDOT will present design plans to the public before the 30% design is complete so that the public can offer input, ask question, or raise concerns.

4.3. Final Design

During this phase, plan documents are developed, including engineering drawings, specifications and special provisions needed to guide construction, and detailed construction estimates. During final design, acquisition of right-of-way identified in Preliminary Design is completed.

4.4. Construction

The final phase of project development is construction where the project is constructed and implemented. This step, which in many ways is the most visible phase of a project, requires follow-through on commitments that have been made to agencies and the public during earlier phases of project development. During this phase, the public is notified at groundbreaking, at project milestones, and at completion.

5.0 Public Involvement Groups

DDOT strives for the broadest engagement feasible at each stage of the project development process. During the scoping of the PIP with the project manager, OCR, and CE, the project manager shall identify

outreach strategy and methods for public involvement to be implemented. In order to facilitate broad stakeholder engagement, DDOT seeks to engage the following entities:

5.1. Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANCs)

An ANC is a non-partisan elected neighborhood body made up of locally elected representatives called Commissioners. There are currently 40 ANCs and nearly 300 Commissioners. Each one has the responsibility of being the official voice of the neighborhood in advising the District government. District agencies are required by law to give ANCs recommendations “great weight” and must provide at least 30 business days before implementation of certain types of changes that will affect a neighborhood. ANC boundaries are based on population and are adjusted every 10 years with the release of the U.S. Census to ensure equal representation among all residents.

Link to list of ANCs: <https://www.dcboe.org/maps.asp>

5.2. Citizen and Civic Associations

These bodies are non-partisan and non-elected neighborhood groups. There are close to 100 Civic and Citizen Associations in the District of Columbia.

5.2.1. Citizen Associations

Citizen Associations work on both neighborhood-specific and city-wide issues by providing feedback and /or testimony on behalf of the citizens of the District. Members of Citizen Associations also serve as an important liaison to the District of Columbia Mayor’s Office and the Council of the District of Columbia on matters important to their residents.

Link to list of citizen associations: <http://dccitizensfederation.org>

5.2.1. Civic Associations

Civic Associations are dedicated to informing, representing, and supporting the residents of the District of Columbia by bringing together leaders of its diverse neighborhoods in an action-oriented body.

Link to list of citizen associations: <http://dcfca.org>

5.2.2. Citizen Associations

Civic Associations are dedicated to informing, representing, and supporting the residents of the District of Columbia by bringing together leaders of its diverse neighborhoods in an action-oriented body.

Link to list of citizen associations: <http://dcfca.org>

5.3. Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

A BID is an organization established by property and business owners to enhance the economic vitality of a neighborhood commercial area. The services BIDs provide to their members are financed by a self-imposed tax on the land uses within the community. There are currently 11 BIDs located in neighborhoods throughout the District of Columbia.

Link to list of BIDs: <http://www.dcbidcouncil.org>

5.4. Main Street Organizations

DC Main Streets is a comprehensive program that promotes the revitalization of traditional business districts in the District of Columbia. Main Street organizations are funded and approved through the DC Department of Small and Local Business Development. There are 16 active and accredited DC Main Street programs.

Link to list of Main Street Organizations: <https://dslbd.dc.gov/service/DCMS>

5.5. Advisory Councils

Advisory Councils are comprised of District of Columbia residents appointed to serve by Councilmembers with a responsibility to advise the Mayor and Council on issues related to transportation issues. Currently, there is a DDOT Bicycle Advisory Council, a Pedestrian Advisory Council, and a Multimodal Accessibility Advisory Council.

5.6. Institutional Stakeholders, Advocacy Groups, & the General Public

In addition to the aforementioned stakeholders, DDOT engages with civic and cultural institutions, advocacy groups, places of worship, and independent businesses as well as others who may not be affiliated with any particular group such as residents, workers, and visitors to Washington, D.C. The general public and institutional stakeholders may hold views or opinions that are not represented by larger organizations or representative bodies, but should still be considered as part of the public involvement process.

6.0 Public Involvement Tools

DDOT utilizes different meeting styles that can be customized for each event or audience. Use of these different methods should take into consideration demographics, transit availability, location, time, and other factors. Examples of meeting types and styles successfully used by DDOT staff include Open House, Technical Presentation, Citizen Advisory Groups (CAG), Citizen Engagement Events (CEE), Tabling at Neighborhood Events, and neighborhood meetings. During the scoping of the PIP with the project manager, OCR and CE staff will discuss effective outreach strategy and methods to each engage each type of public involvement group.

Generally for Open Houses, Public Hearings, Technical Presentations, CAGs and CEEs, meeting space should be reserved at least month ahead of the scheduled meeting. If the venue has not previously been used by DDOT, an early site visit is appropriate. It is often convenient for the public to meet at a recreation center, police station, library, school, or other neighborhood facility. The cost of meeting at a government building is typically for security purposes and minimal. Private buildings are often more costly and may require a Certificate of Self Insurance. This certificate can be obtained from the D.C. Office of Civil Rights Insurance Program. A notification to the property owner is required and a permit may be necessary when tabling at neighborhood events or on WMATA property. DDOT public meetings should be held in transit-accessible and ADA-accessible locations. DDOT public involvement tools are outlined below:

6.1. Open House

An Open House meeting is a beneficial format for kick-off meetings because it provides information on study area existing conditions and allows the public to share their concerns, insights, and desires. Providing details of the project, active listening and information gathering are key components of an Open House style meeting. Members of the project team (usually personnel from DDOT and the consultant team staff) participate in the meeting to discuss the purpose and need of the project and record input from the public. A large roll map of the study area is a great tool that encourages citizens to make comments on specific locations. A presentation with background information has proven to be another helpful tool at this style of meeting. Open houses should be held at a location in the study area that is accessible by numerous forms of transportation. DDOT's Crosstown Multimodal Transportation Study held Open House-style meetings throughout the study process. (<http://dccrosstownstudy.com/>)

6.2. Technical Presentation

A public meeting built around a technical presentation with questions from the public answered by the project team is another successful meeting style that DDOT has utilized. This format is ideal for meetings where the project team needs to provide new details such as recommendations to solve issues identified in earlier public meetings. A technical presentation with a question and answer session is a helpful meeting style when presenting technical information and details that are more understandable with graphics. A moderator or timekeeper may also be necessary if the project is contentious or a large number of attendees have verbal comments. The questions from the audience should be general and relative to the entire project. A brief open house format can come before the presentation or after to allow the public to interact with the project team and ask specific questions. This style meeting has been successfully employed for the Far Southeast Livability Study (<http://www.fse3livabilitystudy.com>).

6.3. Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) Meeting

A CAG is typically a group of residents and stakeholders that represents an elected or appointed body such as an Advisory Neighborhood Council and Council-appointed Advisory Councils. Business Improvement District representatives and issue experts are examples of groups that can also be included. DDOT may develop a CAG for specific projects in order to solicit advisement on transportation plans and studies as well as to assist with public outreach. Typically, this group would meet a week before the public meeting so that their input and advisement can inform what is presented during the public meeting. Additionally, the CAG can assist the project team throughout the project with getting word out to their neighbors and networks in order to increase turnout at the public meeting. DDOT has organized CAG meetings that have met on their own, in addition to ones that are open to the public. When a CAG meeting is open to the public, time should be given to the general public for their input as well, but it is important that the CAG is recognized as the advisory body. An example of successful use of CAG meeting style is the 2016 16th Street Priority Transit Study (<https://ddot.dc.gov/page/16th-street-nw-transit-priority-planning-study>). The Project's CAG was open to the public and always garnered high interest and important feedback from the CAG members and public. In this case, the CAG was instrumental in getting out the word about upcoming meetings, providing feedback on concepts and ideas, and testifying at Council in support of the project.

6.4. Citizen Engagement Events (CEE)

CEEs, commonly referred to as “pop-ups,” are designed for flexibility and information gathering near locations where improvements are being proposed. Example locations include transit stops, shopping

centers, and other areas with a high level of activity. During CEEs, the project team members make themselves available for discussion and to hand out project materials, surveys, comment cards, and other relevant information that helps gather public feedback. Because these events are often outdoors, the use of electronic devices for surveys has been helpful, along with the distribution of rack cards with contact information so that the community can follow up. A sign-up sheet to gather emails for inclusion on an electronic listserv is useful for follow up and future meetings. The public outreach component for DDOT's Vision Zero Initiative utilized the CEE style of meeting (<http://www.dcvisionzero.com>).

6.5. Tabling at Neighborhood Events

DDOT's project teams often attend popular neighborhood events such as farmers' markets and neighborhood festivals. This style of meeting is a successful tool for both receiving and sharing information. Tabling is used for specific projects including the Rock Creek East II Livability Study (<http://rockcreekeast2.com>) at the Kennedy St Farmer's Market. Tabling has also been used to distribute information about the DC Streetcar program at the H Street Festival. Resources needed for this event are similar to the ones used at the CEEs. Giveaways are a popular way to engage the public at DDOT tables.

6.6. Neighborhood Meetings

DDOT also frequently attends ANC, Civic Association, BID and Committee-specific (Pedestrian Advisory and Bicycle Advisory) meetings to share information in a public setting. DDOT often reaches out to these groups to provide information and updates on projects or programs. DDOT makes it easy to request staff attendance at neighborhood meetings. The Request a Speaker link on the DDOT website (www.ddot.dc.gov) directs the public to a request form for DDOT staff to attend a meeting.

6.7. Public Hearings

According to DDOT's Environmental Manual, "A formal [public] hearing is led by a presiding officer. A formal presentation is made, and then the public is given the opportunity to address DDOT or FHWA with their comments. A court reporter records the proceedings and produces a verbatim transcript. Seating is provided facing the head table. Comments and testimony are taken from the floor in an orderly fashion. The order of taking comments and time limits should be announced during the formal presentation." Public hearings are a federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirement as part of projects that require an environmental review, but may also be used at DDOT's discretion for projects without federal funding or impacts. Public hearings provide community stakeholders an

opportunity to learn about project impacts from senior officials and to record community comments as a matter of public record.

7.0 Public Notifications

Federal regulation, 23 CFR, Part 450.210, requires transportation agencies to provide the public with reasonable access to information and adequate public notice, as stated in Section 2. DDOT exceeds this baseline requirement with a number of notification methods to reach citizens such as social media, DDOT press list, posters, advertisements in newspapers, flyers, door hangers, and postcard mailings. Notifications should reflect the demographics of the area and are flexible in language used and method of delivery.

7.1. Social Media

DDOT disseminates and gathers information and feedback through its active social media sites. DDOT's primary Twitter handle is @DCDDOT. Facebook and Instagram are two additional social media platforms through which DDOT is able to reach out to the public. DDOT had over 35,000 followers on Twitter (@DCDDOT), over 3,000 followers on Facebook (@ddotdc), and over 1,200 followers on Instagram (@ddotdc) as of December 2018. Social media is an important way DDOT interacts with the public. Individual projects may also create social media accounts to disseminate project-specific information.

7.2. Press Releases

DDOT has an audience of nearly 100,000 recipients on its subscriber list. In 2018, DDOT issued 414 press releases to its subscriber list and had a 99% delivery rate. On average, DDOT issues 26 releases per month.

Link to sign-up for press releases: <https://dcforms.dc.gov/webform/register-ddot-news>

7.3. Project Websites

DDOT creates project websites that include meeting information, including presentations, information boards, contact information for staff, and other background information. These websites provide the project's details so that the public can review project information and submit feedback without attending a meeting.

Link to project websites: <https://ddot.dc.gov/page/projects-and-planning>

7.4. Neighborhood Listservs

DDOT projects typically develop project listservs, or email lists of residents, stakeholders, and other interested parties. Emails are sent out ahead of public meetings or to alert the public of opportunities to comment or the availability of project reports or documents. DDOT also may share project information on neighborhood listservs, which are not developed or maintained by DDOT, within the project area.

7.5. Newspapers

The District of Columbia has an abundance of daily, weekly and monthly newspapers with high readership. The Washington Post and Washington Times are two popular dailies that DDOT has used in the past for meeting notifications. The Washington City Paper, The Current Newspapers, The Washington Afro-American, Washington Jewish Week, and El Tiempo Latino are examples of weekly newspapers that have a readership among different demographic groups in the city.

7.6. Mailings, Door Hangers, and Robocalls

DDOT acknowledges that not all of the public has access to a computer on which to receive emails, check project websites, or follow social media accounts. For this reason, it is important to consider direct mailings of post cards with project information and/or door hangers. Both of these options tend to have a greater financial cost, but these notification methods can have a huge impact on engaging segments of the population that may have been missed by other notification methods. Mailings and door hangers are especially useful in providing notification to LEP and NEP communities. Robocalls may also be a valuable tool to inform residents of upcoming engagement activities, but their use is limited to households with landline telephones.

7.7. Flyers and Rack Cards

Another technique that does not rely on internet access is the distribution or posting of project flyers or rack cards. These materials are often posted in libraries, places of worship, businesses, or other community centers. They also may be handed out at targeted high-volume locations, such as bus stops or intersections.

7.8. Announcements at ANC Meetings

When it is especially critical to ensure ANC notification of an upcoming meeting, such as with a high profile project, DDOT staff may make an announcement at the beginning of regularly scheduled ANC

meetings. This also allows staff to answer any questions and distribute flyers or other materials to attendees.

8.0 Documentation

The District Department of Transportation is committed to providing all citizens, regardless of race, color, age, gender, or national origin, the opportunity to participate in and respond to transportation plans, programs, and activities that may affect their community.

Each project manager is responsible for overseeing the collection and compilation of outreach documents including the following:

8.1. Title VI Form

The District Department of Transportation is committed to providing all citizens, regardless of race, color, age, gender, or national origin, the opportunity to participate in and respond to transportation plans, programs, and activities that may affect their community. To maintain compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and all relevant federal and local non-discrimination laws, DDOT asks attendees at all public meeting in which DDOT is a participant (whether host or invited guest), to fill out the Title VI Public Involvement Questionnaire. DDOT notes that information is confidential. The forms are submitted to DDOT's Civil Rights Office following all meetings (Appendix E).

8.2. Language Access Requests

The purpose of the DC Language Access Act of 2004 is to provide greater access and participation in public services, programs, and activities for the District's Limited English Proficient/Non-English Proficient (LEP/NEP) constituents at a level equal to that of English proficient individuals. All District government agencies, divisions, or programs, including government contractors and grantees, that provide information or render services to the public, are covered under this Act. To this end, DDOT must ensure that LEP/NEP individuals are provided with meaningful language assistance (e.g., interpretation services and translation of documents) to ensure equal access to all of its programs, benefits, and services. DDOT therefore publicizes information regarding the public's right to request an interpreter and obtain assistance in their language (Spanish, French, Amharic, Vietnamese, Chinese or Korean) free of charge on all of its public notices. For language assistance needs, any requester should notify DDOT's Office of Civil Rights no later than 72 hours in advance of the meeting.

8.3. Translation Services

DDOT will translate vital documents produced in English for the public in other languages when the LEP/NEP threshold of the language of individuals in the host community constitutes 3% or 500, whichever is less. DDOT staff will work with the Office of Civil Rights to have the documents translated.

8.4. Sign-In Sheets and Meeting Notes

DDOT project managers will ask guests at public meetings to sign-in and add them to project mailing lists. DDOT will collect guest name, mailing address, and email address. In addition, DDOT project managers will ensure meeting notes of public meetings are maintained.